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Supreme Court of the United States
OCTOBER TERM 1975

No. 75-104

UNITED JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS OF
WILLIAMSBURGH, INC., *et al.*,
Petitioners.

v.

HUGH L. CAREY, *et al.*,
Respondents.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT

PETITIONERS' REPLY BRIEF

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PETITIONERS' REPLY BRIEF

1. We note, initially, that the principal respondents have filed no response to our petition seeking review of the decision of the court of appeals in this case. The State of New York and the City of New York, represented by the Attorney General of the State and by the Corporation Counsel of the City, have deliberately chosen not to oppose the granting of the petition.¹ We recognize, of course, that the par-

¹ In telephone conversations with counsel (George L. Zuckerman, Esq., and Erwin Herzog, Esq.,) petitioners' counsel has learned that the failure to file any response in this Court was due to a deliberate policy decision made by the appropriate officials of the governmental agencies involved.

ties cannot impose a case on this Court by consent. However, the failure to oppose the granting of certiorari indicates that these respondents recognize that the case presents important questions that warrant consideration and decision here.

2. The Solicitor General's brief in opposition principally disclaims responsibility on the part of the United States for the "quota" apportionment made in this case by State law. It is argued that the Civil Rights Division did not expressly direct a 65 percent non-white quota, but that it merely "evaluated" the 1972 and 1974 redistricting plans. The government cannot deny, however, the undisputed testimony that the 65 percent quota grew out of substantial discussions of an informal nature between the Department of Justice and officials of New York State. No explicit directive was necessary in these circumstances, and the informal "jawboning" technique shown by the record presents equally serious questions of constitutionality as would a formal order. These arise whether or not the Attorney General is a necessary party. If the Civil Rights Division would not have approved a 1974 plan with a figure of less than 65 percent, it cannot avoid responsibility for that judgment by now asserting that the Attorney General need not have been joined as a party to this suit.

3. The Solicitor General's brief first responds to a claim *not* made by petitioners (*i.e.*, that they are entitled as Hasidic Jews, to "separate community recognition in legislative districting").² It then makes only one argument

² Although our constitutional argument does not depend on the existence of a Hasidic community (and a showing that it has now been fragmented), we believe that the effect on the community does demonstrate the personal injury caused to the plaintiffs by the racial gerrymander. In other words, a white voter who is not a member of any particular homogeneous community may be thought to have suffered

(continued)

on the merits to sustain the decision below. The government's brief asserts that since Kings County is approximately 65 percent white, the fact that white voters have a voting majority in 70 percent of the Senatorial districts and 68 percent of the Assembly districts demonstrates that the constitutional rights of white voters have not been abridged. This argument is demonstrably erroneous. The white voters of a particular district or districts who are the victims of a deliberate racial gerrymander can hardly be satisfied by a showing that *other* districts in the county are receiving their constitutional rights. Would it be a defense to deliberate school segregation in one neighborhood school district to establish that there are other neighboring school districts where no racial segregation is practiced or that, on a county-wide basis, the over-all figures show substantial integration?

4. The intervenors' brief asserts, as fact, allegations that were made in the intervenors' Memorandum to the Department of Justice with regard to the 1972 reapportionment.³ These allegations were *not* accepted or approved by the Attorney General in his conclusions regarding that reapportionment. In fact, the Attorney General found only that New York had failed to meet the burden shifted to it

² (continued)

minimal injury if he is in one district rather than another (where he would be if no racial selection were at work). A white voter who is a member of a particular community of white voters suffers a more direct and legally cognizable injury if he is separated from the remainder of that community by a racial gerrymander. The nature of the community involved in this case is graphically described — in words and pictures — in a recent article that appeared in *The National Geographic* of August 1975. We append a reprint of that article to this brief to acquaint the Court — more effectively than lawyer's words can — with the Hasidic Community of Williamsburgh.

³ The Memorandum is cited at page 4, note 3 of the intervenors' brief as the sole authority for the factual propositions stated on page 3 and the top of page 4 of that brief.

under the governing regulations. The record is undisputed that New York's failure to seek judicial review of even this determination was attributable to the shortage of time before the next election.

5. The intervenors also argue that the 65 percent quota was not a 65 percent quota at all but, given "the unusually large number of non-white children in Kings County" (a factual assertion which also finds no support in this record), it is really a 50 percent quota (Intervenors' Brief, pp. 6-7). Of course, our challenge to the imposition of a racial quota applies whether the quota is 50 percent, 65 percent, or 90 percent.

Nor is the unconstitutionality cured even if — as the intervenors assert in this Court (again without any formal proof in the record) — white representatives were elected in 1974 in some districts where a 65 percent quota was applied. It is ironic, to say the least, that the intervenors cite the failure of their own unconstitutional scheme as proof of its validity. Non-white voters in the affected districts may have been sensible enough to have rejected the call to racism upon which the intervenors' position is based. But the intervenors have consistently admitted that the goal of their "quota" was to secure the election of a "black or Puerto Rican candidate" in each of the districts.

Moreover, if the effort made on this record is sustained, there is every reason to expect that, in future cases, the failure of black or Puerto Rican candidates to be elected will be used as proof that a 65 percent quota is too low, and that it must henceforth be raised to 70, 75 or even 80 percent to ensure the election of black or Puerto Rican candidates.

6. Neither of the briefs filed in opposition in this Court challenges the view that the issues presented here are substantially related to those being considered by the Court in *Beer v. United States*, No. 73-1869, which has been set for

reargument this Term. Indeed, the intervenors relied on the *Beer* case in the courts below, and called this Court's actions regarding *Beer* to the attention of the courts while the matter was *sub judice*.

For the foregoing reasons, and those stated in our original petition and in the *amicus curiae* brief, the petition for writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

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The Pious Ones

By HARVEY ARDEN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

Photographs by NATHAN BENN

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MAYBE we should have parachuted
in. That would have seemed much
more appropriate somehow for two
travelers dropping out of one
world into another. Instead, mun-
danelly, photographer Nathan Benn and I
took the subway, boarding on Manhattan's
lower East Side and emerging ten minutes
later into a setting that looked for all the
world as if some errant stagehands had mixed

the scenery for two different plays—one
about a decaying tenement neighborhood in
today's Brooklyn, the other about a pre-World
War II rural Jewish village, or *shtetl*, of
eastern Europe.

"Welcome to Williamsburg in Brooklyn,"
Nathan said. "Or to Satmar in old Hungary.
It depends on how you look at it."

Passing shopwindows hieroglyphed with
square-block Hebrew letters, we entered the

The Pious Ones

By
HARVEY ARDEN

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

Photographs by
NATHAN BENN

Absorbed in prayer, an
ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jew
wraps himself in a prayer
shawl while communing with
God in a small synagogue
in Brooklyn. He sustains an
extraordinary way of life that
the Hasidim—"pious ones"—
zealously pursue in the midst
of America's largest city.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

extraordinary world of Williamsburg's Hasidic Jews, or Hasidim—meaning “pious ones.” Here, wedged amid Brooklyn's ethnic hodgepodge, sprawls a 40-block enclave of ultra-orthodox Judaism, where most of the men wear flowing beards and dangling earlocks in accordance with God's command in the Book of Leviticus 19:27: “Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.”

Their clothing, derived from styles long worn by Jews in eastern Europe, is a striking study in monotone—black or dark-toned suit, wide-brimmed black hat, white shirt buttoned at the neck, no tie. “It may seem plain to you,” one Hasid told me, “but to me it's beautiful!” On Sabbaths and holidays the married men don great sable-trimmed hats called *shtreimels*, giving them a noble, almost regal air as they stride along.





The women, not limited to their menfolk's color scheme, wear modish but distinctly modest garments as they push their baby carriages and strollers along Lee Avenue (page 295). Only after you've been told are you likely to notice that most of them are wearing wigs. Often styled in the latest coiffure, these are worn to conceal their real hair—which is cropped after their wedding and henceforth hidden from men's eyes as prescribed by a centuries-old tradition.

Here, a single subway stop from Manhattan, children learn Yiddish as their native tongue, and rarely if ever see a television show or movie, or read a novel. Nor for that matter are they likely to drift into delinquency, experiment with drugs, or rebel against the value system of their elders.

For here the *mitzvahs*, or commandments, which God on Mount Sinai charged His chosen people to obey, are honored as rules of living with a devotion so vibrant that the tablets of the law might have been carried down by Moses to Lee Avenue this very morning.

To these Brooklyn streets after World War II came several thousand Hasidim, remnants of a widespread movement within Judaism that flourished in eastern Europe from the mid-1700's until—but only until—the Nazi catastrophe. The survivors arrived in America and Palestine with blue concentration camp numbers tattooed on their forearms and the searing horror of Hitler's death camps branded on their souls.

HOPING TO GET A GLIMPSE of the famed Hasidic *tzaddik*, or spiritual leader—the Satmar Rebbe, Yoel Teitelbaum—Nathan and I hurried to reach the Satmar *bes medresh*, or house of study and prayer, before sunset. Already a fireball sun had tangled itself in the cables of the nearby Williamsburg Bridge. Before us stretched an almost surreal perspective of venerable Brooklyn brownstones, their storefronts already shuttered against the gathering blue dusk of this fast-approaching Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

"A few minutes more on the subway and we'd already have broken the law," Nathan said. "The *Jewish* law, that is, against traveling or working on a Sabbath or religious holiday. For an Orthodox Jew to ride a subway or even to push the buttons on an elevator is forbidden. And put on your yarmulke, too." He referred to the (Continued on page 284)

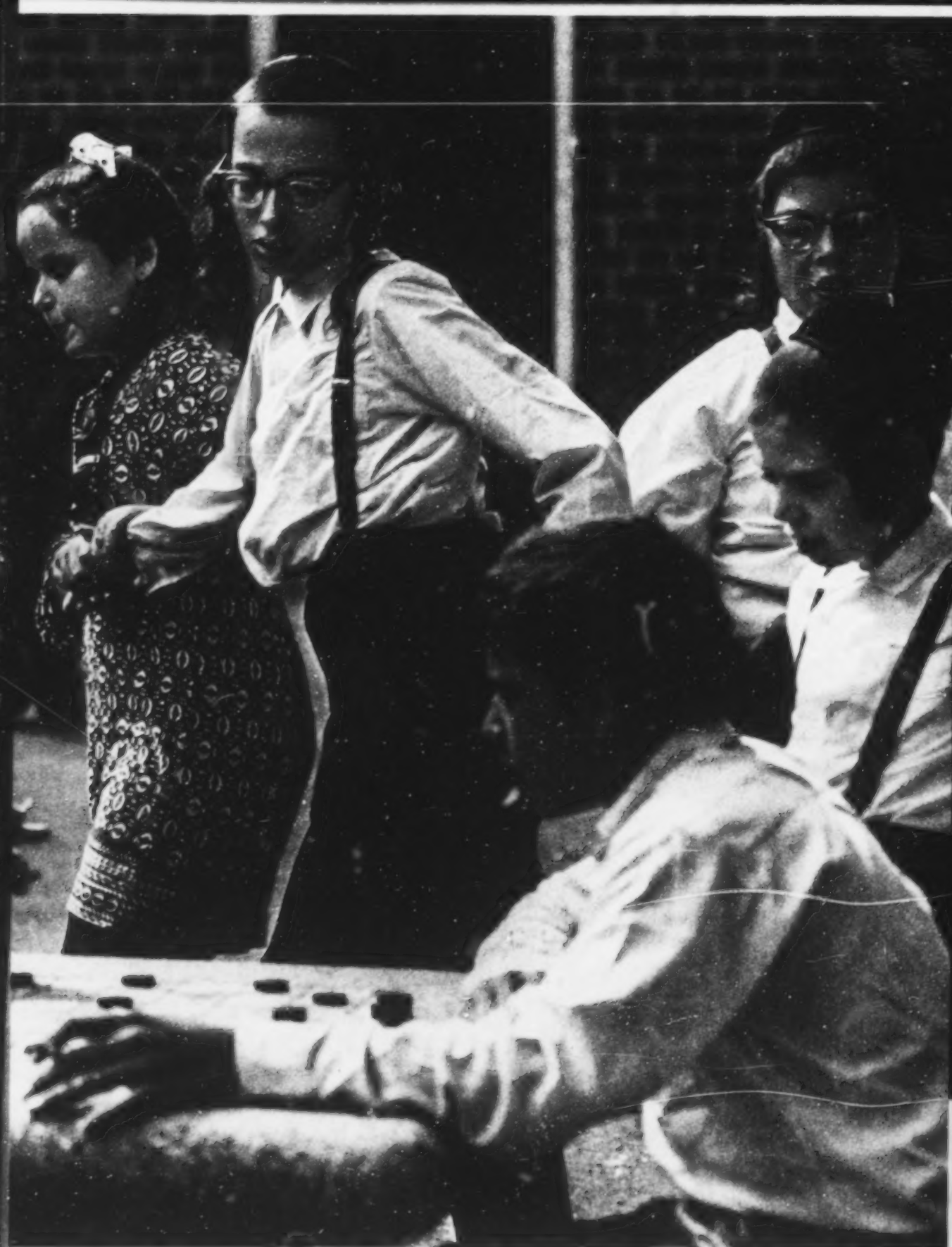


"... I have been a stranger
in a strange land." EXODUS 2:22

Outpost in the Diaspora, Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood (facing page), just across the East River from Manhattan, became a refuge after World War II for thousands of east European Hasidic Jews—survivors of the Nazi holocaust. Transplanted to America, the scorched but still living tree of Hasidic faith blooms anew in Brooklyn. Down streets where Yiddish is heard more often than English, a Hasid (above) hurries along to begin another day dedicated to the service of God.



"Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God. . . ." DEUTERONOMY 4:23



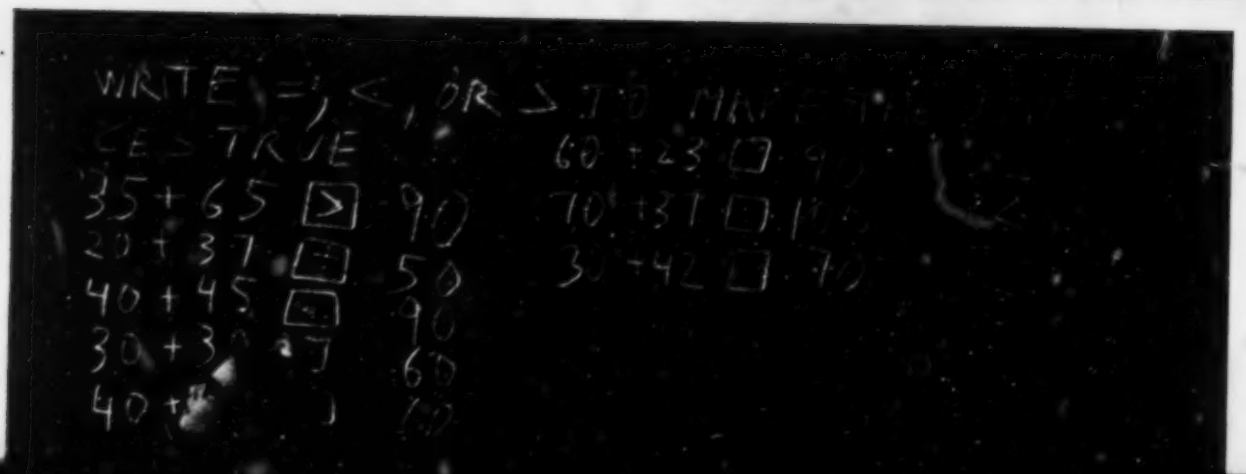
Her brother's keeper, a Hasidic girl pulls a sibling from the lures of the profane world. Distractions such as movies, television—even watching "outsiders" at checkers—are shunned by most Hasidim,

whose lives pivot on strict observance of Orthodox Jewish law and ritual. Males wear earlocks to fulfill God's command: "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads. . . ." (LEVITICUS 19:27)



"Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments. . . . teach them thy sons. . . ." DEUTERONOMY 4:5, 9

Learning God's wisdom—and a bit of man's—students at a Hasidic *yeshivah*, or academy (above), spend most of a dawn-till-dusk study day poring over the huge tomes of the Talmud, the vast exposition on Jewish law and custom. Conforming to New York State requirements, Hasidic youths also learn a modicum of "English"—meaning not only the English language, which many first learn at school, but also such subjects as math (right) and social studies.



skullcap traditionally worn by Jews. "The Hasidim wear them all the time—even when they're sleeping."

I later inquired of a Hasidic acquaintance why he wore his yarmulke even when he went to bed.

"Because a Jew covers his head as a sign of his respect for God," he answered. "And—tell me, please—am I not still a Jew when I'm sleeping?"

From the pocket of my coat I extracted a black skullcap and stopped before a shop-window to position it on my head. At that moment a Hasidic lad, a beardless copy of his dark-clad elders, came to a sudden halt in front of me, eyebrows raised.

"You should be ashamed!" he admonished, his earlocks quivering. "Do you mean that you put on your yarmulke only after you've gotten here? Are you a Jew only when you're in Williamsburg?" Eyes flashing darkly, he hurried off down Lee Avenue. I shrugged with a sense of utter helplessness. It would not be the last time that the admittedly unorthodox quality of my own Jewishness would be brought into open question by zealously observant Hasidim.

Though I had become bar mitzvah—a "son of the commandment" or a "man of duty"—at age 13, I had only occasionally attended a synagogue since then. Certainly I had no sense of obligation to follow all of the multitude of mitzvahs, or commandments, that God had charged the Jews of Moses' time to obey in fulfillment of their covenant with Him. To the Hasidim, however, these mitzvahs are as important today as they were in ancient times.

No fewer than 613 such mitzvahs are enunciated in the five books of Moses comprising the Torah, or Pentateuch. They range from the Ten Commandments and such sublime moral precepts as "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" to so technical a regulation as "neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee."

These latter two mitzvahs, seemingly worlds apart in significance, appear in consecutive verses of the Book of Leviticus (19: 18, 19). The Hasidim hew as strictly to the latter as to the former. To heed and safeguard the 613 mitzvahs, plus literally thousands of other laws and traditions that have evolved from them over the millenniums, becomes the very fulcrum of their daily existence.

REACHING the Satmar bes medresh, Nathan and I elbowed our way through a dense crowd of Hasidim toward a large inner doorway. Squeezing up as far as we could, we stood on tiptoe and peered into the main prayer hall, a great room into which, I later learned, some seven thousand people had been packed. All were utterly absorbed in prayer, faces adrip with mingled sweat and tears of ecstasy, lips murmuring impassioned prayers at a furious pace, bodies rocking and swaying and trembling with emotion—turning that huge prayer hall into an echo chamber of the spirit reverberating with passion for God.

The Satmar Rebbe himself, leading the prayers at the front of the room, was completely blocked from our view by adoring crowds of Hasidim. A Hasid later explained to me why he tries to get physically near the

Rebbe: "The Rebbe's soul," he said, "is closer to God than other men's. We get as near to him as we can so that our prayers will be carried up to heaven with his, like sparks rising up with a great flame."

Not until my next visit to Williamsburg did I actually get a clear view of the Rebbe. This was at the annual celebration of his escape from the Nazis, an observance combined with a fund raising for the Satmar parochial school system, which serves thousands of Hasidic children.

Once again I found myself in the midst of a great crowd of Hasidim. All were amurmur with expectation of the Satmar Rebbe's arrival. A sudden commotion erupted around a side entrance of the hotel ballroom where the celebration was being held. All eyes turned in that direction.

Preceded by aides, who created an aisle for him through the vast throng, the Rebbe himself now entered—a slender patriarch with flowing white earlocks and a graceful tuft of white beard curled on his black-suited breast like new-spun silk. His face, untouched by the pandemonium around him, radiated an almost visible glow of spirituality that seemed to be reflected in the faces of his disciples.

At the sight of the revered tzaddik, the entire congregation rose to its feet in a single body and exploded into a rhythmic wall-rattling chant, which crescendoed until it seemed the room could contain not another decibel. At this point the Rebbe, with the slightest batonlike motion of one index finger, brought the runaway chorus of thousands to an instantaneous halt. Even the echoes seemed to die at once.

Now, through the loudspeakers, came the Rebbe's voice—the merest pin-scratch on a slate of silence. Yet that parchment-thin, otherworldly voice was instantly compelling. His disciples, many rocking and swaying as if in prayer, hung on each word as he thanked God for liberating him from the Nazis and for enabling him to be here with his beloved Hasidim. He spoke of the crucial importance of educating their children in Hasidic schools and reminded them that charity, which made such education possible, was one of the noblest of virtues. He then sat back, a benign expression lighting his face, and allowed his aides to take over the fund-raising activities (following pages).

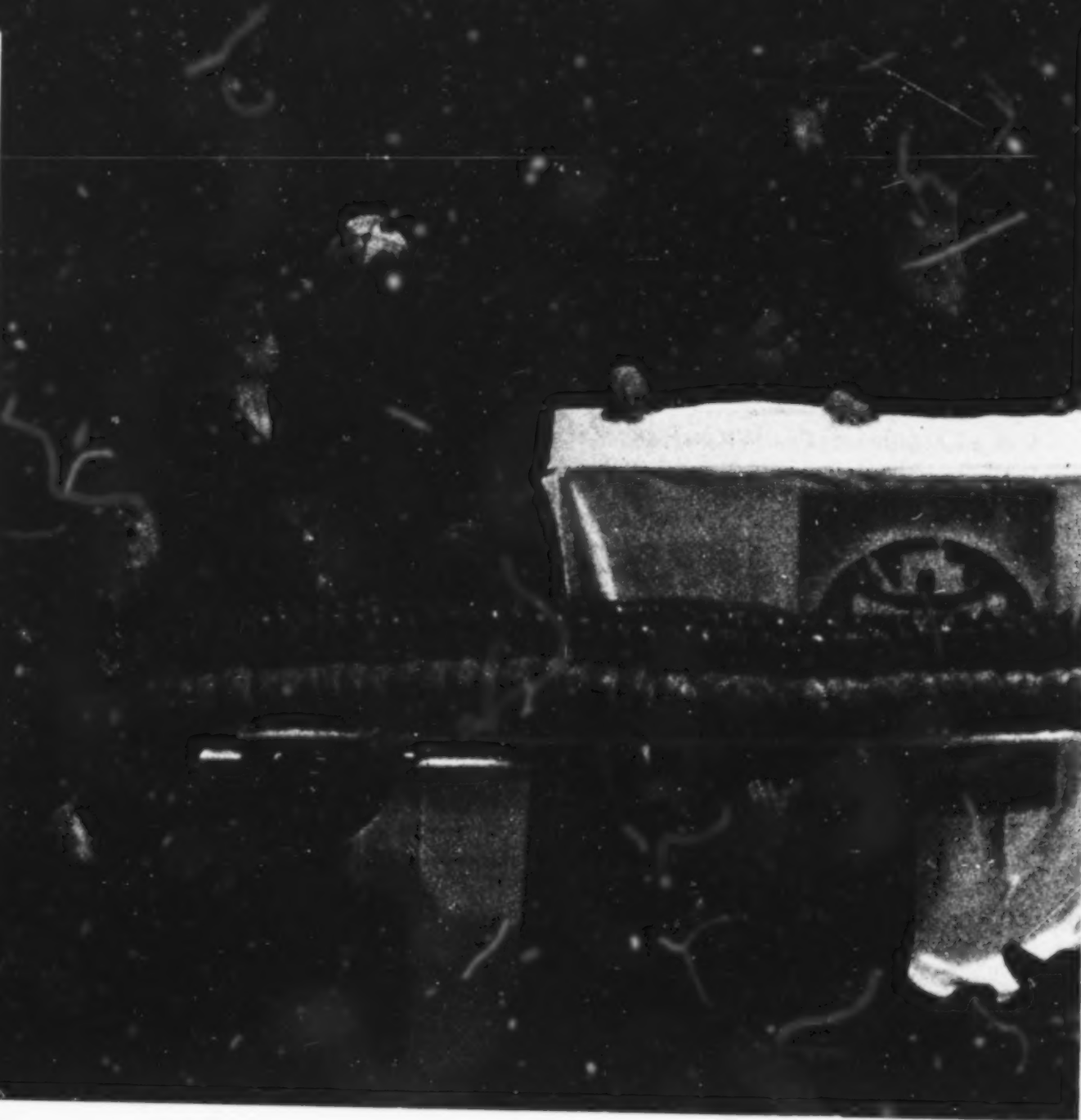
THERE WAS A TIME, before a stroke weakened him some years back, when the Rebbe—now approaching 90—would have discoursed at greater length. His disciples recall how, on the Festival of Simchas Torah—"Rejoicing in the Torah"—he would dance for hours through the night with the holy Torah scroll cradled in his arms.

"He's as famed for his scholarship as for his saintliness," one Hasid told me. "Once, when I was a boy, I climbed a tree outside his window to see if it was true he often studied all night long. Well, there he was, in the middle of the night, bent over a volume of the Talmud, his finger at his temple, studying. A true saint he is!"

If the adulation of his devotees seems somewhat extreme to the outsider, one must understand the pivotal importance of this charismatic man in both their private lives and their collective history.

"Thou shalt not..." A glinting tear of remorse burns the cheek of a Hasidic youngster being admonished for some transgression by fellow students in the hallway of a *cheder*, or school for young boys. Such mutual chiding among peers discourages nonconformism and helps to bring about a strict adherence to the dos and don'ts in the prodigiously complex Hasidic code of behavior.

But on Purim it's OK. Two Hasidic lads step out of the rain to light up a smoke during the holiday of Purim. On this traditional day of merry-making, good-natured mischief reigns. Youngsters puff cigarettes and don costumes, while their elders—winking at usual restraints against excessive alcoholic consumption—down frequent glassfuls of wine or slivovitz, a fiery plum brandy.

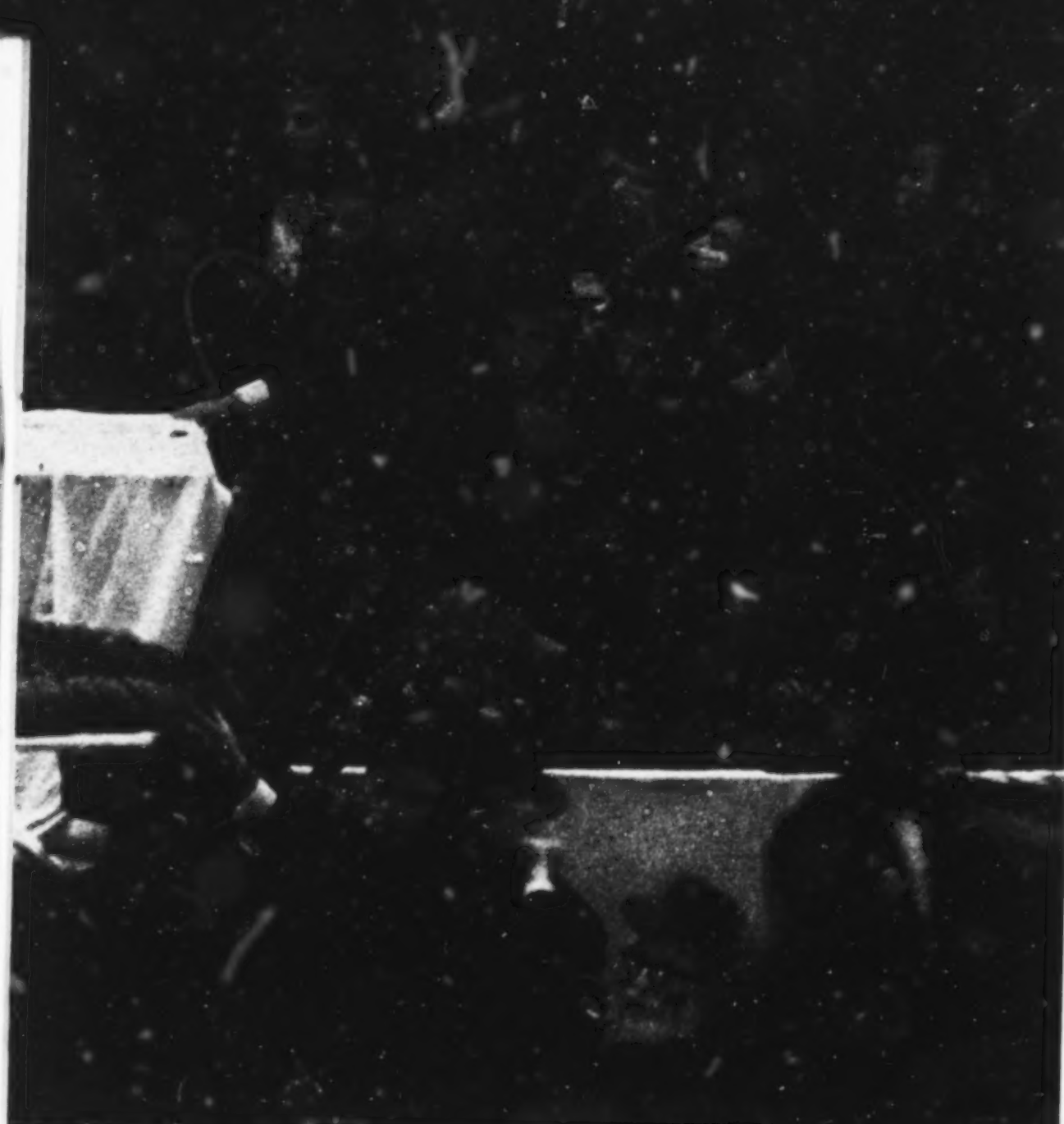


The master and his disciples: At a yearly celebration of his 1944 escape from the Nazis, the white-bearded Satmar Rebbe, Yoel Teitelbaum (**above**, seated), gathers with some of his many thousands of followers. Renowned for his saintly ways and intellectual brilliance as well as for his militant anti-Zionism, the Rebbe is the guiding light of both religious and secular affairs among the Satmar Hasidim.

The enormous braided loaf of bread, or *challah*, on the table before him will be

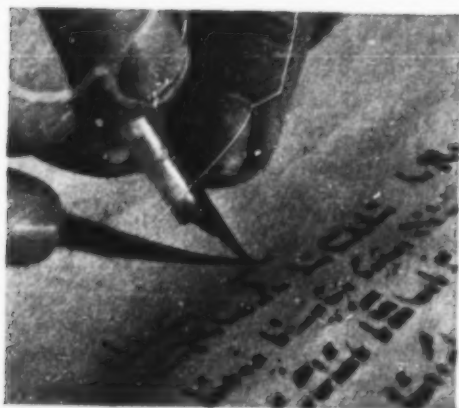
divided and eagerly shared by hundreds of Hasidim—the merest crumb from the master's table being passionately sought after.

Feet and souls equally animated (**right**), a group of Hasidim at a wedding celebration dance and chant for hours on end in an ever-mounting outpouring of spiritual joy and devotion. The Baal Shem Tov, a mystic who founded Hasidism in eastern Europe in the mid-1700's, imbued his followers with just such a sense of joyful worship and ecstatic love of God.



ROY MORSCH, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (ABOVE)





"And I have filled him with the spirit of God . . . in all manner of workmanship." EXODUS 31:3

"One chases after a living when not chasing after God," a Hasid told the author. A cutter and polisher in Manhattan's diamond district (above) brings much-needed cash into Brooklyn's Hasidic enclave. Many work at jobs created by the community's special religious requirements. Deft fingers of a ritual scribe (left) keep busy lettering Torahs—the first five books of the Bible—and various religious articles.

Long before World War II he was already a famed tzaddik in eastern Hungary, becoming spiritual leader of a Hasidic community centered in the town of Satmar—today a part of Romania, and spelled Satu Mare. This region came under the Nazi jackboot late in the war, by which time the vast majority of eastern Europe's Hasidim—perhaps 500,000 or more, no one knows even roughly how many—had been systematically annihilated with millions of other Jews. Then, in 1944, the Satmar Rebbe and his followers, along with most of the rest of Hungarian Jewry, were dispatched to death camps.

Even in that living hell he and his Hasidim strove to fulfill what mitzvahs they could. One of the first cruelties inflicted by the Nazis was the shearing off of their beards and earlocks. The Rebbe, it is told, pretended to have a toothache and concealed both beard and earlocks beneath a large bandage. Miraculously, the Nazis took no notice.

The bribing of Nazi officials enabled a trainload of Jews, including the Satmar Rebbe, to escape to Switzerland. Soon after, the Rebbe went to Jerusalem. There, however, his ideas failed to jibe with those of the Zionists who were working to set up the yet-unborn State of Israel. The government of the Promised Land, the Rebbe adamantly insisted, must be founded not by men but by the Messiah himself. To this day he declares that the present State of Israel usurps the soil of Zion and actually delays the coming of the Messiah.

Such a militantly anti-Zionist attitude—not shared by all groups of Hasidim—has raised the blood pressure of many Israelis and pro-Zionist American Jews.

LEAVING JERUSALEM in 1946, the Satmar Rebbe came to the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, already a bastion of American Orthodox Jewry that had become a haven for displaced European Jews after the war. Though many of Williamsburg's newly arrived Hasidim had not been the Rebbe's immediate disciples before the war, they found in his presence a spiritual magnetism that could pull together the shattered pieces of their lives.

"When we arrived," one Hasid told me, "we had nothing. We were dazed, hopeless, without any direction or center in our lives. The Satmar Rebbe, may he be forever blessed, gave us that direction, gave us a center.

He instilled in us a new hope and restored our belief in the world—and in ourselves."

Starting from scratch, the Rebbe laid the foundations of a new Satmar Hasidic community; its membership today numbers in the tens of thousands. Other Hasidic rebbes, too, settled in Williamsburg and nearby Brooklyn neighborhoods—most notably the Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose following in Crown Heights has attracted thousands of American Jews. These Brooklyn communities and the various groups in Israel comprise the largest concentrations of Hasidim in the world.

Transplanted to America, a new tree of faith began growing—and blooming—in the streets of Brooklyn.

I once asked my Satmar friend Moishe Green: "Who will take the Rebbe's place when, God forbid, he leaves this world?"

He answered: "We don't think about it. Only the Messiah himself can replace so great a tzaddik as the Rebbe. My own belief is that, before the Rebbe leaves us, the Messiah will come to Brooklyn and lead us home to the Promised Land."

SUCH DEEP-SEATED BELIEF in the redeeming powers of Hasidic rebbes traces back to the 18th century to the founding father of Hasidism, Israel Baal Shem Tov, one of the most extraordinary and luminous figures in the millenniums-long history of Judaism. A poor and unpretentious man, a native of the Carpathian Mountain region, he brought to the poverty-wracked, pogrom-plagued Jewish masses of Poland and the Ukraine a spiritual message of transcendent joy and hope.

Inveighing powerfully against the often-arid emphasis on religious scholarship that had come to dominate Jewish spiritual life in his time, he proclaimed that even the most unlearned Jew could experience a direct communion with God through ecstatic worship and a truly joyful keeping of the mitzvahs. What mattered was not so much the loftiness of one's intellect as the purity of one's soul, however humble. Love of God, he taught, could be expressed as well through spontaneous singing and dancing as through formal prayer and scholarship.

For a time this passionately mystic approach to religious life aroused the bitterest opposition of the Orthodox establishment. Some of the early Hasidim were excommunicated. Yet the movement spread like holy

"... the Lord shall give you ...
flesh to eat, and ... bread
to the full." EXODUS 16:8



Consecrating each act, Hasidim see the table as a kind of altar, and the food served thereon as a form of offering. A *shochet*, or ritual slaughterer (above), dispatches chickens with one painless flick of his razor-sharp blade, as prescribed by Jewish dietary laws. At the table a Hasid intones a blessing while cutting bread (facing page). Salt is ever-present on the table to conform with the commandment: "with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." (LEVITICUS 2:13)

wildfire, inflaming the hearts and minds of vast numbers of east European Jews, learned and unlearned alike. It was a genuine democratization of Jewish religious life, making the deepest spiritual experience accessible to the many as well as to the few.

After the death of the Baal Shem Tov—a title meaning, roughly, "Master of the Good Name"—his closest disciples established a number of Hasidic communities, where the fervor of his teachings continued to burn bright. These leaders became known by the title *rebbe*—a designation not to be confused with *rabbi*, though both mean "my master" or "my teacher." Any pious and learned man may become a *rabbi*, but only the rarest of individuals has the transcendent qualities required of a *rebbe*.

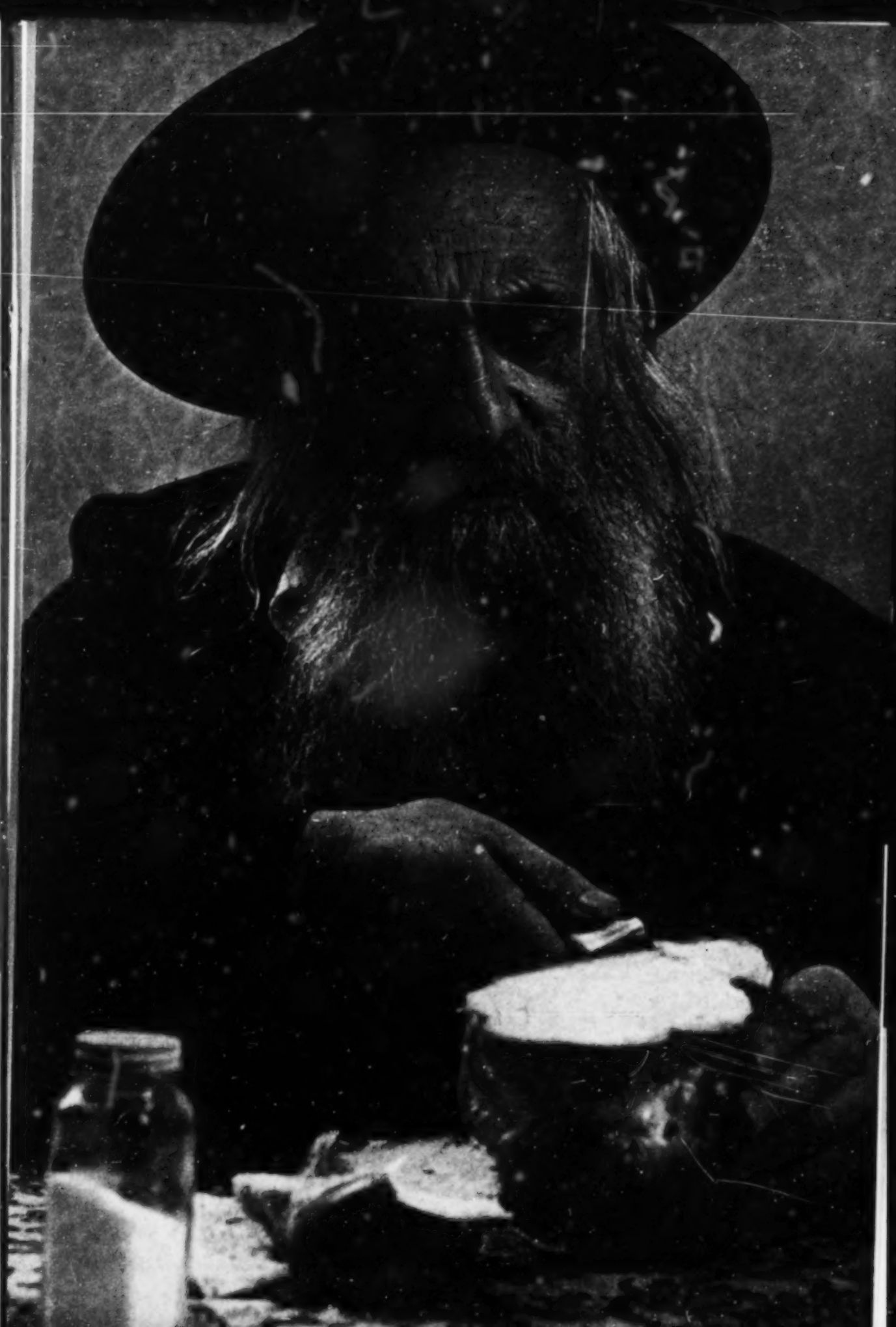
IN TIME—and this has often been criticized by outsiders—the leadership of Hasidic communities became largely dynastic, usually being passed from a *rebbe* to one of his sons. The community's loyalty to the *rebbe* is easily transferred to the offspring. On some occasions, in the absence of a suitable direct heir, a son-in-law or an especially eminent disciple is chosen.

The modern Jewish writer and philosopher Martin Buber devoted a great deal of his life's work to collecting tales concerning the various Hasidic *rebbs*. His two-volume *Tales of the Hasidim*, a monument of scholarship, mirrors both the charm and the profundity of Hasidic thinking.

Though Hasidism has unquestionably evolved since the time of the Baal Shem Tov, becoming more formalized in its rituals—some critics would even say rigidified—I found its original message of joyful communion with God still ringing loud and clear in the streets of Brooklyn.

I recall one night being swept up in the ecstatic revels of a group of rabbinical students. For hours, to the sour strains of an improvised trumpet-and-accordion band, they snake-danced in a great writhing, singing, chanting mass that seemed to become more and more energized as the minutes throbbed along. Joining in, somewhat reluctantly at first, I put my hands on the shoulders of the Hasid in front of me and allowed myself to be swept along on that mounting black wave of communal ecstasy.

At one point I found myself swaying beside Moishe Green, whose forehead was pearly



with sweat. His eyes glowed. "You see," he breathed, "we aren't just dancing. We're soaring to God!"

Even in a milieu where the spiritual predominates, the rent must be paid and groceries bought. The Baal Shem Tov himself often worked at humble jobs, and his followers in Williamsburg frequently do likewise.

THE HASIDIC MODE OF LIFE, with its wide range of behavioral and educational restrictions, makes holding many kinds of well-paying jobs extremely difficult. You often see bearded Hasidim with dancing earlocks and sweating brows driving pickup trucks, heaving crates, working as clerks or storekeepers. Many work in Manhattan as diamond cutters and merchants—bringing much-needed cash into the financially pinched Williamsburg community. Hasidic women as well as men work in the "needle trades," manufacturing garments for firms often owned by Orthodox Jews.

"We are part of the capitalist society," Rabbi Albert Friedman, a community leader, said. "We take jobs that do not interfere with our way of life. Yes, we have some wealthy men whom God has blessed with financial success, and they share—are expected to share—with the others."

A great many Hasidim work in jobs that fill the exacting and specialized needs of the community. Meat, for instance, must not be simply kosher but *glat* kosher, that is, kosher beyond any conceivable question. The Hasidim frankly distrust any food that they themselves have not subjected to the most rigorous conformance with Jewish dietary law.

Hence, most of the food consumed by the Hasidim is prepared with fastidious care within the community itself. Ritual slaughterers dispatch cattle and chickens according to ancient laws. Stores feature "Jewish milk" from dairies supervised by observant Jews. Wheat for the Passover matzo, or unleavened bread, is guarded with unceasing vigilance from the time it is harvested and milled until it comes piping hot and crisp from glowing bakery ovens in Williamsburg. If so much as a single drop of water comes in contact with the flour before it is used—hence allowing it to leaven however slightly—the entire batch is rendered useless for Hasidic consumption. This extraordinary care in food preparation has great appeal for other Jews, and some non-Jews as well. Outsiders' purchases of Hasidic



"I have built an house of habitation for thee. . . ." II CHRONICLES 6:2

Home for the Hasidim is another temple. Young girls in a Hasidic household (above) skylark over a coloring book while their father, a rabbi, characteristically pores over a volume of the Talmud. These youngsters are among the 13 of the rabbi's second marriage; he lost his first family at Auschwitz.

Not burdened with Talmudic studies, Hasidic girls have time to absorb more of "outside" culture than boys. At girls' schools run by the community, they learn practical skills like sewing (right).



foodstuffs help buoy the community's economy.

You'll find no doctors or lawyers among the Satmar Hasidim, since they don't acquire the education needed for the professions. Besides, going to college is frowned upon—a waste of time in a life devoted to the study of the Torah and its vast exposition, the Talmud.

AT THE AGE OF 3, a boy has his first haircut, leaving him with shaven crown and untouched earlocks. Next he is taken to the bes medresh. There a dab of honey is placed on an aleph—first letter of the Hebrew alphabet—in the Torah; his finger is placed on this, and then on his lips, to show him that the study of God's law is sweet. Thus begins a lifetime "toiling in the Torah."

Teenage boys often arrive at their school, or *yeshivah*, to begin study at five in the morning and, what with a day of study and prayers, don't arrive home until eight in the evening. A few hours in the afternoon are spent on what the Hasidim call "English"—meaning not just the English language, which many children first learn in school, but all the curriculum required to meet minimal New York State educational requirements, subjects such as math, history, and geography.

"The plain fact is," I was told, "many parents would rather their children didn't learn any more 'English' than necessary."

Said another Hasid: "Constant study of the Torah and Talmud sharpens the mind to a phenomenal degree. Some of our boys have become computer programmers—a profession requiring keen logical skills."

You see them studying, usually in pairs, the great tomes of the Talmud spread before them on desks or tables. Rarely do they use a pencil while studying, instead storing in their minds endless passages of Jewish law and tradition. Some go on to be ordained as rabbis, but, in actual fact, relatively few of Satmar's scholars are needed for rabbinical posts. Most marry in their late teens or early 20's, study for a final year or so full time—if the family can afford it—then find a job. For the rest of their lives they will spend much of their free time on Torah study.

"Think what they might do if all that study were directed to some worldly purpose," I remarked to a non-Satmar Hasid knowledgeable about the outside world.

"I suppose so," he said. "After all, look at Freud, Marx, Einstein—all Jews who made

their mark on the non-Jewish world. To me, however, they would have been much better off studying in a yeshivah. What a waste of three fine Talmudic minds!"

Hasidic girls get a much more rounded education, by American standards, than the boys. Not encouraged to study the Talmud, they need learn only the traditional practices required of a Hasidic housewife in running a completely orthodox home. Hence, they have vastly more time for worldly studies, and in speech, manner, and appearance often seem more Americanized than the men.

The pivot of their lives is the home, which in Williamsburg usually means modest quarters in an elderly apartment building, a brownstone, or a housing project. Even in the dimmest basement apartment, there shines an inner sunlight, a glow of *Yiddishkeit*. To this sanctuary of feminine order and arrangement, the men and older boys often come rushing home from work or study for a hastily gulped meal with the family, then fly out again into the night for evening prayers at the bes medresh.

On the Sabbath, of course, all this hubbub comes to a serene standstill, and the woman's role as queen of the household comes to the fore. As wife and mother she lights the Sabbath candles—an act of utmost sanctity that leaves no doubt as to her vital position in the family. Often, when not tied down to little ones, she takes a job to supplement the family income. On the occasions when women attend the bes medresh, the balcony is set aside for them. A latticed screen separates them from the menfolk, who are not supposed to be distracted from their prayers by the presence of the opposite sex.

If their lot seems a far cry from women's liberation, I found few complaints. "Nothing is more satisfying than a Jewish life lived in the Hasidic way," one housewife told me.

WITH NATHAN BENN one afternoon I knocked at the door of the basement apartment of a Hasidic friend, a rabbi—and thoughtlessly extended my hand in greeting to his wife.

"Oh, no," she said, stepping back. "I can't shake hands, I'm sorry. Please take no offense." I had forgotten that Hasidic women do not touch men other than their husbands and close relatives. Even between a man and wife, it is exceedingly rare to see an overt display of affection.

Later we sat down with the family to a wondrous meal of chicken soup and gefilte fish, boiled chicken and whitefish, potato *kugel*, and so on—an archetypal Jewish feast. The rabbi intoned a sequence of blessings in a marvelously moving cantorial tenor. As we ate, we imbibed deep draughts of Talmudical lore along with frequent glassfuls of fruit-flavored Mayim Chaim—a brand of kosher soda pop whose name means "water of life" or "living water."

At one point in the meal, Nathan poured

himself a glass of Mayim Chaim. Seeing my glass nearly empty to his right, he swiveled the bottle around and started to fill it. The entire family gasped.

"That is not done, Nathan!" admonished the rabbi. "It is simply not done!"

"But what did I do?" Nathan asked.

"Oh... well... after all, Nathan, how could you know?" said the rabbi evasively.

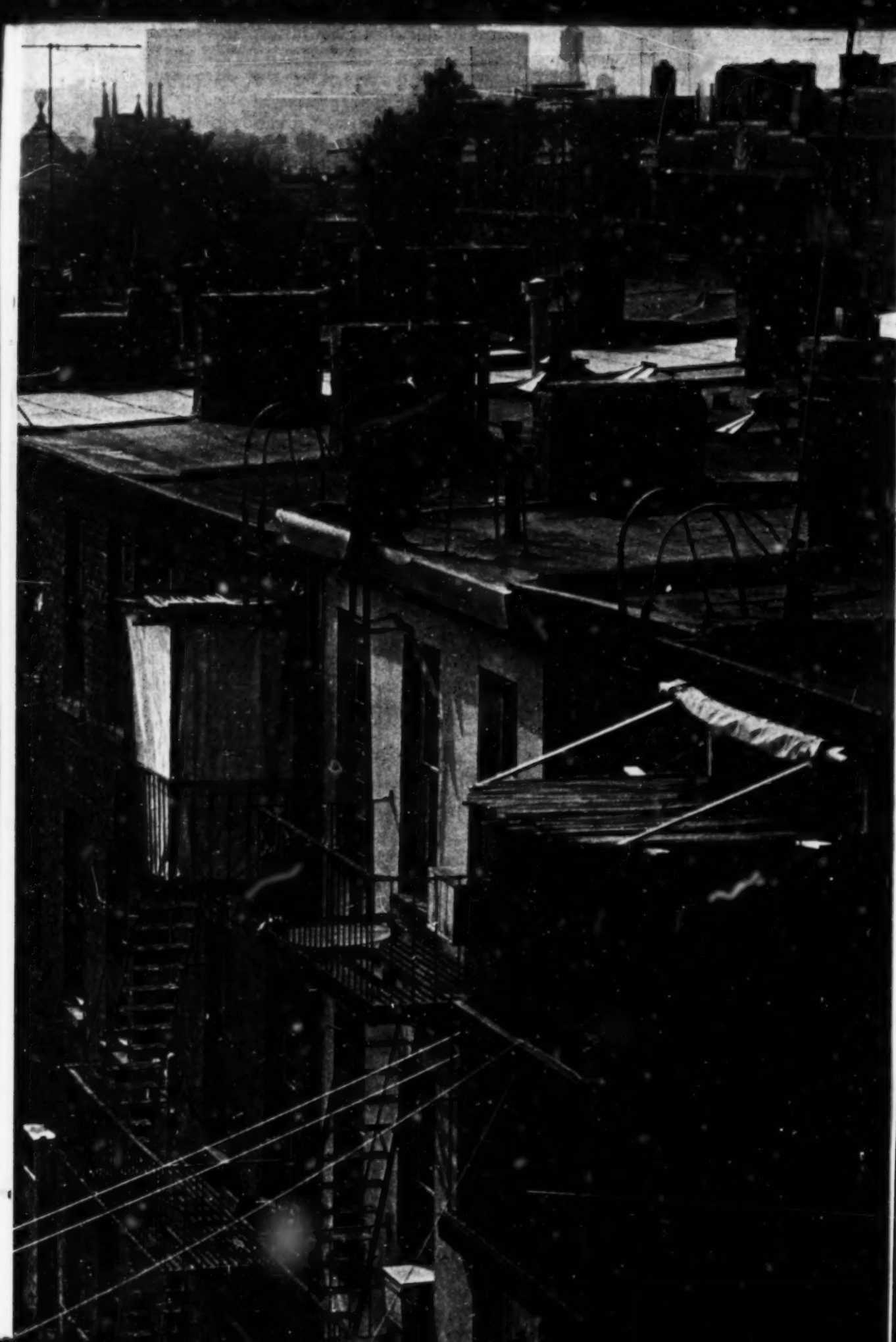
"Know what?" Nathan pleaded.

"Please," said the rabbi, "we talk no more about it. The subject is finished."



"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." PROVERBS 31:27

Doting Hasidic mothers turn a street corner into a happy hubbub of exclamations over a friend's offspring. In accordance with a centuries-old practice, most Hasidic women have their hair sheared upon marriage, thereafter covering their heads—as have these women—with wigs and kerchiefs.



With that, he lapsed into Yiddish, refusing to discuss the matter further.

Later, recalling the incident to another Hasid, I demonstrated how Nathan had poured my glass of Mayim Chaim.

"Stop!" he cried. "Don't do that!"

"Do what?" I asked.

"The way you're pouring the bottle, turning your hand backward like that... it's how one performs the ablutions when washing the dead! We never make such movements in normal situations."

Once again I had run headlong into the multifarious rituals that at times seem to surround the Hasidic way of life like a spearpoint fence, making entrance difficult for outsiders, and egress no easy thing for the Hasidim themselves. Yet, in the eyes of the Hasidim, each spearpoint in that fence safeguards the fulfillment of their holy covenant with God. Their adherence to every last punctilio of religious law is no mere rote act but a conscious fulfillment of God's command, bringing about the sanctification of even the smallest acts of everyday life.

WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD, the Satmar Hasidim seemed to me to live not so much side by side as back to back. I recall one afternoon approaching on the street a Roman Catholic nun whose church, with a largely Spanish-speaking congregation, stands almost incongruously in the middle of Williamsburg's Hasidic neighborhood. When I asked her about her experiences with the Hasidim, she simply shook her head. "I have lived in this parish for 13 years," she said, "but never has a Hasid come up and spoken to me. Not once. They don't even catch your eye."

Police detective Nino Marano, whose beat has been Williamsburg for years, told me: "The Hasidim rarely bother other people, and would just as soon other people didn't bother them. We've had periodic trouble—fights between Hasidim and other ethnic groups. But you rarely see a Hasid who starts the trouble—though they often seem to attract it just by being so different and stand-offish. Once a Hasid made insulting remarks when I ticketed his truck for a parking violation. Another Hasid reported the man's conduct to the *bes din*, the religious court, where the Hasidim prefer to handle their own civil infractions. Hearing the case, the rabbis berated the man and he apologized. I was much

more satisfied than if he'd been hauled before a civil judge."

Nearly all Hasidim take pride in becoming American citizens, which allows them to vote. "We are often the swing vote in local elections and political affairs," Rabbi Friedman told me.

Although the Satmar Hasidim share to some degree in community funds made available by various government agencies—they pay taxes, after all, like everyone else—they



"Ye shall dwell in booths seven days." LEVITICUS 23:42

Fire-escape sanctuaries, *sukkahs*, or "booths" (facing page), recall the Israelites' abodes during the flight from Egypt. After fixing his sukkah's roof, a Hasid descends by way of his neighbor's ladder. Interiors may be richly decorated (above). Here family members dine during the Festival of Booths.



"I place my soul within His palm before I sleep. . ."

HEBREW SIDDUR, OR PRAYERBOOK

Day ends as it began, with prayer. A Hasidic youngster caps off hours of study and prayer with—of course—more study and prayer. Throughout the day he wears a *tallis koton*, or "little prayer shawl," as prescribed by Mosaic law. The garment's fringes, like those of the larger shawl worn by married men at morning devotions, are a constant reminder of the 613 divine commandments in the Torah—the Hasid's ageless guide to God's law and daily living.

prefer self-help to reliance on outsiders. They not only run their own school system out of Satmar funds, but also operate a walk-in clinic, a nursing service, an emergency first-aid and ambulance service, a private community bus service, a summer camp system, an employment agency, and a free-loan society. They very definitely care for their own.

Recently they have also established a small self-contained community for a few hundred Hasidim at Monroe in New York's Orange County—about an hour's drive upstate. Does this signal a mass exodus from the inner city? Probably not, at least for the near future. Immediate plans for the Monroe complex envisage a community of perhaps 250 families. "We are not running away," Rabbi Friedman explained. "We are simply growing."

While I toured a Satmar school for girls, the principal, Rabbi Naftali Hertz Frankel, pointed out how reverently the children repeat the Pledge of Allegiance.

"Almost all of them are the grandchildren of concentration camp survivors," he said. "They *know* how much America and its freedom means. To them, the Pledge of Allegiance is almost a kind of prayer."

TAKING LEAVE of Williamsburg, I stopped off to say good-bye to a bearded old Hasidic friend at the tiny Xerox shop he manages on Lee Avenue.

Between running off copies for customers, he spoke of his first family—all killed in the concentration camps—and of the blessings of raising a second family in "a nice Yiddish place like Williamsburg."

The green light of the Xerox duplicator flickered on his gray beard and earlocks. I recalled an old Jewish tale I had heard about Hanoch the shoemaker, as one of the 36 legendary "secret tzaddikim," or holy men, who—unbeknownst even to themselves—help sustain the universe with their piety.

Hanoch, goes the legend, uttered praises of the Lord with each stroke of his tack hammer. Watching my Hasidic friend reel off another batch of Xerox copies, I conjured up the image of him, too, as one of the secret 36, uttering praises to God each time he pushes the "print" button on the Xerox machine for another copy.

It was one last indelible image to carry with me as I took the subway from Williamsburg to that other world in Manhattan. □